

[Burlington County Times](#) – April 2, 2010

By: CHRIS BISHOP Burlington County Times

EVESHAM - The Vietnam War claimed the lives of 58,148 Americans. Another 304,000 were wounded in the conflict.

More than 2 1/2 million U.S. service personnel took part in a war that ended only with the collapse of South Vietnam in 1975. American troops were withdrawn in 1973. Of the thousands of Americans who served in that unpopular war, many received medals for their valor.

Robert Aguero, a Delran resident, was one of them.

Aguero, who was a sergeant in the Army during his time in the Asian country, was awarded the Bronze Star for his actions in a battle at a village in September 1970. But Aguero never got the Purple Heart for his wounds received during that fight - until now.

On Thursday, in a brief ceremony at the local office of U.S. Rep. John Adler on North Maple Avenue, Aguero received a Purple Heart and certificate.

In presenting the veteran with his award, Adler said Aguero "kept fighting."

"You were wounded and you kept going," said Adler, the 3rd District congressman from Cherry Hill and member of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs.

"Our veterans deserve our respect and gratitude," said the congressman, who was in middle school when Aguero served in Vietnam. "This honor is long overdue."

"I can't say too much," said a visibly moved Aguero to Adler. "Just thank you."

In a brief interview after the ceremony, Aguero, a native of Philadelphia, said he was drafted into the Army in 1969.

During a night battle with the enemy near a village in Quang Ngai province in central Vietnam in September 1970, Aguero was under attack from automatic weapons and grenades. He helped protect his squad while sustaining grenade wounds in his arms and left hand.

Aguero said he spent 10 days in the rear as his wounds healed.

"Then I went back to my platoon," he said with no emotion. "You were with your best friends."

Aguero returned to the United States in the spring of 1971 and left the Army after putting in his two years.

"I spent 11 months, 28 days in Vietnam," he recalled with a smile.

He has worked as machinist for 35 years, the last 17 with Campbell Soup Co. in Camden.

Aguero, 61, and his wife, Cindy, have two grown daughters and a son.

"My thoughts and prayers are with the brave men and women who continue to protect the freedom which every American enjoys," he said.